

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 10617 031812Z

63

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1132

INFO JEC PARIS 8280

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 10617

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, VN, IT

SUBJECT: VATICAN COMMENTS ON ITALIAN CAMPAIGN FOR PRISONERS IN RVN

1. AS PART OF SEPTEMBER CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF "200,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS BEING HELD BY THIEU REGIME," ITALIAN PRESS HAS BEEN PUBLISHING REPORTS OF TEN-DAY VISIT TO RVN OF CATHOLIC PRIEST ENRICO CHIAVACCI, A PROFESSOR OF MORAL THEOLOGY FROM FLORENCE, AND ITALIAN PROTESTANT PASTOR TULLIO VINAY. ALTHOUGH CHIAVACCI AND VINAY WERE UNABLE TO SEE ANY PRISONERS IN VIETNAM, THEY HAVE VERIFIED TO ITALIAN PRESS THAT SAIGON DETAINING WELL IN EXCESS OF 200,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS UNDER SUB-HUMAN CONDITIONS. VINAY, WHO BY FAR MORE OUTSPOKEN OF TWO, SHARPLY ATTACKED U.S. WHICH HE ALLEGED FURNISHING LARGE SUMS OF MONEY TO GVN POLICE IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH SOPHISTICATED CONTROL SYSTEMS OVER POPULATION. ONE ITEM CITED WAS A REGISTRATION OF ALL TYPEWRITERS IN COUNTRY SO THAT SOURCE OF ANY CLANDESTINE ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA COULD BE EASILY TRACED. MOREOVER, VINAY NOTED THAT GVN ALMOST ENTIRELY RESPONSIBLE FOR GREAT NUMBER OF TRUCE VIOLATIONS AS PRG HAS NO REASON TO VIOLATE TRUCE SINCE EVERYTHING GOING IN ITS FAVOR AND IT ONLY MATTER OF TIME UNTIL THIEU FALLS. ACCORDING TO VINAY, SAIGON NOW FOCUSING MORE ATTENTION ON DESTRUCTION OF NEUTRALIST FORCES

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PAGE 02 ROME 10617 031812Z

RATHER THAN ON COMMUNISTS.

2. VATICAN DESK OFFICER FOR VIETNAM OCT. 3 SPOKE TO US DISPARAGINGLY OF CHIAVACCI-VINAY PRESS CAMPAIGN. HE DREW SOME SATISFACTION FROM CHIAVACCI'S RELATIVE QUIET, HOWEVER, SOURCE SAID BOTH MEN PROBABLY DECENT CHRISTIANS, BUT UNDOUBTEDLY COMPLETELY DUPED BY GROUPS SYMPATHETIC TO COMMUNISTS IN VIETNAM. SOURCE NOTED THAT FOREIGN CLERGY VISITING VIETNAM ALWAYS SPEAK TO SAME HANDFUL OF PRO-PRG CATHOLICS, INCLUDING SEVERAL PRIESTS, AND COME AWAY WITH TOTALLY INACCURATE PICTURE. VATICAN BELIEVES THAT LOCAL VIETNAMESE BISHOPS ARE ENTIRELY CONVERSANT WITH TRUE SITUATION IN THEIR COUNTRY AND ARE CAPABLE AND WILLING TO SPEAK OUT ON MORAL ISSUES WHENEVER NECESSARY. FOR FOREIGN CHURCHMEN TO MEDDLE IS DEFINITELY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. IN THIS CONTEXT, SOURCE SINGLED OUT AUXILIARY BISHOP THOMAS GUMBLETON OF DETROIT FOR CRITICISM.

3. IN SOURCE'S VIEW, SOUTH VIETNAM NOW FACING SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SLOW-DOWN IN FOREIGN AID AND NEED TO ADJUST TO WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN FORCES. BEAUDRY

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